PUMP BOTTLE CAP

FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to lids that create a differential pressure within the container on which the lid is deployed and, in particular, it concerns a lid assembly with an integral pump, in which the reciprocating linear motion of the piston is actuated by rotational movement of a pump actuating element.

Several bottle cap devices are know that are configured for use in conjunction with a separate pump such that once the vacuum is created, the pump is disconnected from the cap. These devices suffer from the need to store the pump while not in used and prevent loss of the pump during such storage. Further, some of the dump mechanisms for devices of this type are expensive electrical devices that are inappropriate for consumers with a small number of containers requiring vacuum sealing.

One attempt to provide a bottle cap with an integral vacuum pump is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,637,321 to Wang. Wang's cap includes a piston style pump, the cylinder of which is deployed inside of the container on which the cap is deployed. A handle is formed on the exposed end of the piston, and the pump is operated by a push-pull motion. One drawback to this style of pump is the length of piston stroke necessary for efficient pumping. Therefore, the cylinder extends relatively far into the container, or in the case of U.S. Patent 5,535,900 to Huang, the pump extends above the bottle.

Further, the bottle caps mentioned above require removal of the cap in order to access to contents of the bottle. Nor do the devices of prior art include a vacuum indication mechanism or a filter for use with powered contents in the container.

There is therefore a need for a container lid assembly with an integral pump, in which the reciprocating linear motion of the piston is actuated by rotational movement of a pump actuating element. It would be beneficial for the lid assembly to provide access to the contents of the container while maintaining the vacuum. It would be of further benefit for the lid assembly to include a differential pressure indicator. It would also be beneficial for the lid assembly to include a vacuum indicator.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a lid assembly with an integral pump, in which the reciprocating linear motion of the piston is actuated by rotational movement of a pump actuating element.

According to the teachings of the present invention there is provided, a pump lid assembly for a container, the lid assembly comprising: (a) a seat-portion for sealing connection to the container; (b) a pump configuration associated with the seat-portion and configured with a pumping element actuated in a reciprocating linear motion to pump gas from within the container to an external atmosphere; and (c) a rotatable actuating element mechanically associated with the pump configuration such that continuous rotation of the actuating element in a given rotational direction generates the reciprocating linear motion of the pumping element, thereby pumping a quantity of gas through the pump configuration thereby generating a pressure differential within the container.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the actuating element substantially circumscribes at least a portion of the pump configuration such that the continuous rotation is about the pump configuration.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, one of the pumping element and the actuating element includes a longitudinally-wave-like groove, and the other of the pumping element and the actuating element includes at least one pump activation pin configured to engage the wave-like groove, such that during the continuous rotation the activation pin contacts an edge of the longitudinally-wave-like groove, thereby generating the reciprocating linear motion

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pumping element is a substantially cylindrical piston element, an outer surface of which is a circumferential wall configured with the groove circumscribing the wall so as to form a single continuous groove; and the actuating element includes the at least one pump activation pin.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a contents-dispensing mechanism for removing non-gaseous contents from the container while maintaining the pressure differential.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the contents-dispensing mechanism includes a rotatable dispensing element deployed in the seat-portion, the dispensing element configured with a contents receptacle, and the dispensing element rotatable such that the contents receptacle is alternately alignable with a contents inlet, opening into the interior volume, and a contents outlet, opening to the exterior atmosphere, the contents inlet and the contents outlet being spaced apart such that as the contents receptacle alternates between the contents inlet and the contents outlet the contents receptacle passes through a region in which fluid communication between the contents receptacle and one of the contents inlet and the

contents outlet is fully interrupted before fluid communication is established with an other of contents inlet and the contents outlet.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided a ratchet mechanism to limit rotation of the actuating element to the given rotational direction.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided a lid-removal mechanism configured to selectively limit rotation of the actuating-ring in relation to the seat-portion.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the lid-removal mechanism is engaged by displacing the actuating element a pre-limited distance in a direction longitudinally away from the container and displacing at least a portion of the actuating element inward toward the seat-portion so as to engage complementary teeth configured in both the actuating element and the seat-portion.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided a pressure differential indicator.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pressure differential indicator is configured as a passage with at least one opening to the interior volume of the container and at least one opening to the exterior atmosphere, the opening to the exterior atmosphere being closed by a pressure indicating element that is displaceable between two different states so as to indicate pressure differential and non-pressure differential states within the interior of the container.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pressure differential indicating element is configured from resilient material biased to a first state, so as to indicate the non-pressure differential state, and displaceable to a second state, so as to indicate the pressure differential state.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pump configuration includes at least one one-way inlet valve and at least one one-way outlet valve.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided a filter element associated with the one one-way inlet valve.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pumping element and the rotatable actuating element are configured as a single element such that the continuous rotation includes rotation of both the actuating element and the pumping element, and the reciprocating linear motion includes reciprocating linear motion of both the pumping element and the actuating element.

There is also provided according to the teachings of the present invention, a lid assembly for removing contents from a container in which a pressure differential has been created while maintaining the pressure differential in the container, the lid assembly comprising: (a) a seat portion configured for attaching the lid assembly to the container; (b) a contents inlet configured in the set-portion, the contents inlet opening into an interior volume of the container; (c) a contents outlet configured in the seat-portion, the contents outlet opening to a exterior atmosphere of the container; (d) a rotatable dispensing element deployed in the seat-portion; and (e) a contents receptacle configured in the dispensing element, the dispensing element rotatable such that the contents receptacle is alternately alignable with the contents inlet and the contents outlet; wherein the contents inlet and the contents outlet are spaced apart such that as the contents receptacle alternates between the contents inlet and the contents outlet the contents receptacle passes through a region in which fluid communication between the contents receptacle and one of the contents inlet and the contents outlet is fully interrupted before fluid communication is established with an other of contents inlet and the contents outlet.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the rotatable dispensing element is actuated by a rotatable shaft manipulated from an exterior of the seat-portion.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the rotatable dispensing element is configured as a substantially spherical element.

There is also provided according to the teachings of the present invention, a screw on lid assembly for a container, the lid assembly configured to selectively limit removal of the lid assembly from the container, the lid assembly comprising: (a) a seat-portion for attaching the lid assembly to the container, the seat-portion including a substantially cylindrical lid body; and (b) a rotating actuating ring rotatably attached to the seat-portion so as to circumscribe the cylindrical body, at least a portion of the actuating ring configured as a locking tab being displaceable between a normal free-rotation position, in which the actuating-ring is free to rotate in relation to the seat-portion, and a locked non-rotation position, in which the position of the actuating-ring is locked in relation to the seat-portion; wherein the locked position is engaged by displacing the actuating-ring a pre-determined distance in a direction longitudinally away from the container and displacing the locking tab inward toward the seat-portion so as to engage complementary teeth configured in both the actuating-ring and the seat-portion.

There is also provided according to the teachings of the present invention, a lid assembly for creating a pressure differential within a container, the lid assembly comprising:

(a) a seat-portion for sealing connection to the container; (b) a pump configuration associated with the seat-portion; and (c) a rotatable actuating element mechanically associated with the pump configuration, the rotatable actuating element configured with a pumping element actuated in a reciprocating linear motion to pump gas through the pump configuration, such that continuous rotation of the actuating element in a given rotational direction rotates both the rotatable actuating element and the pumping element and generates the reciprocating linear motion of the pumping element and the rotatable actuating element, thereby pumping gas through the pump configuration to generate a pressure differential.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, at least a portion of the actuating element substantially circumscribes at least a portion of the pump configuration.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, one of the pump configuration and the actuating element includes a longitudinally-wave-like groove, and the other of the pump configuration and the actuating element includes at least one pump activation pin configured to engage the wave-like groove, such that during the continuous rotation the activation pin contacts an edge of the longitudinally-wave-like groove, thereby generating the reciprocating linear motion

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pump configuration includes a pump cylinder configured to accept the pumping element, a substantially cylindrical outer surface of the pump cylinder is a circumferential wall configured with the groove circumscribing the wall so as to form a single continuous groove; and the actuating element includes the at least one pump activation pin.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a contents-dispensing mechanism for removing non-gaseous contents from the container while maintaining the pressure differential.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the contents-dispensing mechanism includes a rotatable dispensing element deployed in the seat-portion, the dispensing element configured with a contents receptacle, and the dispensing element rotatable such that the contents receptacle is alternately alignable with a contents inlet, opening into the interior volume, and a contents outlet, opening to the exterior atmosphere, the contents inlet and the contents outlet being spaced apart such that as the contents receptacle alternates between the contents inlet and the contents outlet the contents receptacle passes through a region in which fluid communication between the contents receptacle and one of the contents inlet and the

contents outlet is fully interrupted before fluid communication is established with an other of contents inlet and the contents outlet.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a ratchet mechanism to limit rotation of the actuating element to the given rotational direction.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a lid-removal mechanism configured to selectively limit rotation of the actuating-ring in relation to the seat-portion.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the lid-removal mechanism is engaged by displacing the actuating element a pre-limited distance in a direction longitudinally away from the container and displacing at least a portion of the actuating element inward toward the seat-portion so as to engage complementary teeth configured in both the actuating element and the seat-portion.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a pressure differential indicator.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pressure differential indicator is configured as a passage with at least one opening to the interior volume of the container and at least one opening to the exterior atmosphere, the opening to the exterior atmosphere being closed by a pressure differential indicating element that is displaceable between two different states so as to indicate pressure differential and non-pressure differential states within the interior of the container.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pressure differential indicating element is configured from resilient material biased to a first state, so as to indicate the non-pressure differential state, and displaceable to a second state, so as to indicate the pressure differential state.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, the pump configuration includes at least one one-way inlet valve and at least one one-way outlet valve.

According to a further teaching of the present invention, there is also provided, a filter element associated with the one one-way inlet valve.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is herein described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a partial cut-away side view of a first preferred embodiment of a lid assembly, constructed and operable according to the teachings of the present invention, configured to create a vacuum within the interior of the container;

FIG. 2 is a partial cut-away side view of a variant embodiment of the first preferred embodiment of a lid assembly constructed and operable according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a detail of a cross section taken along line C-C of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a detail of region S of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is a detail of a cross section taken along line B-B of FIG. 2;

FIG. 6 is a detail of region W of FIG.2;

FIG. 7 is a detail of a cross section taken along line H-H of FIG. 2;

FIG. 8 is a cross section taken along line T-T of FIG. 2;

FIG. 9 is a detail showing an alternate contents receptacle constructed and operable according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a detail of region Z of FIG. 2;

FIG. 11 is a detail of a cross section taken along line A-A of FIG. 2;

FIG. 12 is a partial cut-away side view of the lid assembly and container of FIG. 1 with the addition of a pressure differential indicator constructed and operable according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional view of a second preferred embodiment of a lid assembly constructed and operative according to the teachings of the present invention, configured to create a vacuum within the interior of the container;

FIG. 14 is a partially cut-away view of a seat-portion of the embodiment of FIG. 13;

FIG. 15 is a cross-sectional view of a variant embodiment of the second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 16-19 is a cross-sectional view detail of the lid assembly of FIG.13, showing the elements of an alternative selectively engagable lid-removal mechanism; and

FIG. 20 is a cross-sectional view of the lid assembly of FIG. 13, configured so as to pressurize the interior of the container.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is a lid assembly with an integral pump, in which the reciprocating linear motion of the piston is actuated by rotational movement of a pump actuating element.

The principles and operation of a lid assembly with an integral pump according to the present invention may be better understood with reference to the drawings and the accompanying description.

By way of introduction, the present invention is a container lid assembly that includes an integral pump so as to create a pressure differential within the container. As used herein, the term "pressure differential" refers to a pressure within the interior of the container being different from the atmospheric pressure outside of the container. This pressure differential may be lower than atmospheric pressure so as to be at least a partial vacuum within the container. As used herein, the terms "vacuum" and "partial vacuum" are used interchangeably and are consider to be synonymous, referring to any state of partial vacuum up to and including a state of complete vacuum. Alternatively, the pressure differential may be a state of higher than atmospheric pressure within the container.

As will be discussed below, there are several features of the present invention that can be used in synergy as illustrated by the preferred embodiments, but are of value when implemented separately. These features include a pump configuration that activates the reciprocating linear motion of the piston by the rotational movement of a pump actuating element; a contents-dispensing mechanism for removing contents from the container while maintaining the at least a partial vacuum within the container; a selectively activated lid-removal mechanism (childproof mechanism); a vacuum indicator; and a filter configured to filter the gases entering the pump from the interior of the container.

Two preferred embodiments of the present invention are described herein. A first preferred embodiment, described with regard to Figures 1-12, which includes a piston actuating ring and substantially cylindrical pump piston that are configured as two separate elements, such that the rotational movement of only the piston actuating ring activates reciprocating linear motion of only the piston. In the second preferred embodiment, described with regard to Figures 13-20, the piston actuating ring and the substantially cylindrical pump piston are configured as a single element, such that the rotational movement of the piston actuating ring/piston activates their reciprocating linear motion.

Referring now to the drawings, Figure 1 illustrates basic principles of the pump configuration of the first embodiment of the present invention. The first embodiment of a lid assembly **2** is secured on the container **4** by seat-portion **6**. A portion of the seat-portion is configured so as to define at least part of a pump cylinder **6P**. Circumscribing at least a portion of the pump cylinder **6P** is a piston actuating ring **8**. A substantially cylindrical pump piston **10** is deployed in the pump cylinder **6P** such that a variable pump volume is defined between them. The circumferential wall **12** of the piston is configured with a longitudinally-wave-like groove **14** that circumscribes the piston and joints itself at a point of origin so as to form a single continuous groove. As see in better detail in Figure 4, the piston actuating ring **8** is configured with a pump activation pin **16** that extends into the groove **14**. As the actuating ring **8** is rotated about the pump cylinder **6P** and the piston **10**, the pump activating pin **16** contacts the edge of the groove **14**. Due to the angle of the groove **14** in relation to the direction of the movement of the pump activating pin **16**, the torque of the actuating ring **8** is translated into linear motion of the piston **10**. The wave-like configuration of the groove **14**, therefore, results in reciprocating linear motion of the piston **10**. As the piston **10** moves in a linear direction away from the container **4**, the variable pump volume increases in volume and gases are drawn from the interior of the container **4** into the pump through the one-way pump inlet valve **18**. It will be appreciated that a configuration in which the wave-like groove is configured in the actuating ring and the pump activating pin configured in the piston is within the spirit of the present invention.

As illustrated in Figure 6, the pump inlet valve **18** may consist of a valve base **40** having at least one passageway **42** through which gases may pass from the interior of the container to the variable pump volume. The passageways **42** are sealed by a resilient sealing element **44**. The resilient sealing element **44** is deformable from a normally closed state, in which no gases may pass between the interior of the container and the variable pump volume, and an open state in which gases may pass between the interior of the container and the variable pump volume. Deformation of the resilient sealing element **44** is affected increasing the volume within the variable pump volume such that atmospheric pressure in the variable pump volume is less than the atmospheric pressure within the interior of the container, at which time the pressure of the gases in the container force the deformation of the resilient sealing element **44**. As the piston **10** moves in a linear direction toward the container **4**, the variable pump volume decreases in volume, pressure in the variable pump volume increases,

and gases are forced from the pump to the surrounding atmosphere through the one-way valve **20**.

In the preferred embodiments illustrated herein, the groove **14** is configured with four equally spaced apart crests **22** and therefore four equally spaced apart troughs **24**, and the actuating ring is configured with four pump activating pins **16**, spaced at intervals of 90°. Such a configuration results in four reciprocating linear motions of the piston **10** per one revolution of the actuating ring **8**. It will be appreciated that the number of the wave crests **22** and troughs **24** may be varied to suit the circumference of the piston **10**. Further, the piston may be actuated by only one or any number of activating pins **16**, however, it is preferable that the number of activating pins **16** be equal to the number of wave crests **22**.

It will be appreciated that when the actuating ring **8** is rotated, the torque of the actuating ring **8** will cause a rotationally unchecked piston **10** to rotate within the cylinder **6P** rather than the desired linear movement. Therefore, in some embodiments, rotation of the piston **10** within the cylinder **6P**, when torque is applied by the actuating ring **10**, is restricted by a pin **50** extending from the wall of the cylinder **6P**, for example, inserted into a groove **52** in the wall of the piston **10**, for example. In some alternative embodiments having a central stabilization post **122** (see Figure 2), rotation of the piston **10** within the cylinder **6P** may be restricted by and pin and groove associated with the interface of the piston **10** and the central stabilization post **122**, or the central stabilization post **122** may be configured with any rotation restricting cross section, such as but not limited to, substantially any closed geometric shape having one or more angles and substantially any smooth closed curve other than a circle.

Since the actuating ring **8** is free to rotate about the seat-portion **4**, in some embodiments of the present invention it is necessary to limit the rotation of the actuating ring **8** to one direction to facilitate screw attachment of the lid assembly **2** to the container **4**. Figure 3 illustrates a first preferred ratcheting configuration that limits rotation of the actuating ring **8** to a counter-clockwise direction in relation to the seat-portion **6** of the lid assembly **2**. Once rotation of the actuating ring **8** is thusly limited, the lid assembly **2** is attached to the container **4** by rotating the actuating ring **8**, and therefore the seat-portion, in a clockwise direction until a vacuum tight seal is formed between the seat-portion **6** and the container **4**. Actuation of the piston **10** in order to create a vacuum state within the container **2** is achieved by rotating the actuating ring **8** in a counter-clockwise direction.

Figure 2 illustrates a variant of the first preferred embodiment of the lid assembly, referred to here as **100**, configured to include a number of the major features of the present

invention as mentioned above, specifically, a pump configuration **120**; a contents-dispensing mechanism **150**; a selectively activated lid-removal mechanism (childproof mechanism) **200**; and a filter **170**. The pump configuration illustrated here is similar to the pump configuration of Figure 1, with the addition of a central stabilization post **122** extending from the seat-portion of the lid assembly **100** into the center of the pump cylinder. The piston **10** is configured as an annulus that circumscribes the stabilization post **122** within the pump cylinder.

In some application, once a vacuum is created within the container it is desirable to remove at least some of the contents while maintaining the vacuum state. The present invention therefore provides a contents-dispensing mechanism **150** configured in the seat-portion **106** of the lid assembly **100**. The contents-dispensing mechanism **150** includes a rotatable dispensing element **152** that is rotatable such that a contents receptacle **160** travels between a contents inlet **154** and a contents outlet **156** (see Figure 7). The contents inlet **154** and a contents outlet **156** are spaced apart such that the as the dispensing element is rotated the contents receptacle passes through a region in which fluid communication between the contents receptacle and either the contents inlet or the contents outlet is fully interrupted before fluid communication is established with the other of either the contents inlet or contents outlet. The dispensing element **152** is actuated by the dispensing handle **158**, which may be rotated between an open and a closed state (see Figure 8). It is preferable that the dispensing element **152** be seated in a vacuum seal seat **162** so as to prevent a vacuum leak between the dispensing element **152** and the seat-portion **106** of the lid assembly **100**. It should be noted that the dispensing element **152** may be of substantially any suitable shape, such as but not limited to, a sphere (as illustrated herein) and a cylinder. Further, the contents receptacle **160** may be of substantially any suitable size or shape corresponding to the contents **164** of the container, as illustrated in Figure 9. The contents receptacle **160** may be configured to hold a predetermined number, for example, 1, 2 or more, of individual contents items, such as but not limited to pills and capsules. Alternately, the contents receptacle **160** may be configured to hold a predetermined amount or volume of contents, such as but not limited to, powdered, granulated, and liquid contents. In some embodiments, the dispensing element **152** may be biased to a normal state in which the contents receptacle **160** is aligned with the contents inlet **154**. That is, after the contents have been dispensed through the contents outlet **156**, the dispensing element **152** will automatically return to a position in which the contents receptacle **160** is in fluid connection with the interior of the container **4**.

In some applications, controlling access to the contents of the container may be of concern, such as keeping children from opening medication containers, for example. In such application, the actuating ring **8** is configured with a selectively engagable lid-removal mechanism **200** (see Figures 2 and 10). In a normally relaxed state, the actuating ring **8** is biased, by either gravity or a spring configuration for example, such that an inwardly extending lip **202** rests of the outer surface of the seat-portion **6**. In order to unscrew the lid assembly **2** from the container **4**, the actuating ring **8** is raised, or moved longitudinally away from the container until lip **202** strikes the bottom edge of a plurality of teeth **204** that circumscribe the outer surface of the seat-portion **6**, at which point the lip **202** is aligned with groove **206** which also circumscribes the seat-portion **6**. At least a portion of the actuating ring **8** is then compressed inwardly such that at least a portion of lip **202** enters groove **206** and a number of complementary teeth **210**, which circumscribe the inner surface of the actuating ring, engage a number of teeth **204**. Rotation of the actuating ring **8** in relation to the seat-portion **6** is thereby locked and the lid assembly may be unscrewed by rotating the actuating ring **8**, and therefore the entire lid assembly **2**. Removal of the lid assembly therefore is a three-step process. First, lifting the actuating ring, then pressing a portion of the actuating ring against the set-portion, and finally turning the lid assembly.

In some applications of the present invention, it may be desirable to filter the gases leaving the interior of the container before the gases enter the pump configuration. This will be especially true if the contents of the container are in a powdered state. Therefore, some embodiments of the present invention are configured with a filter **170** deployed in a passageway **172** through the seat-portion **6** connecting the interior of the container to the variable pump volume within the pump configuration. The filter **170** may be permanently installed during manufacture, or the filter **170** may be a replaceable filter.

Figure 12 illustrates a lid assembly **300** constructed and operable according to the teachings of the present invention and including a pressure differential indicator configured here as a vacuum indicator **310**. As illustrated here, the vacuum indicator **310** is configured as a passageway **312** through the lid assembly **300** extending between the interior **304** of the container and the exterior atmosphere. The passageway **312** is closed by a vacuum indicating element **314**. The vacuum indicating element illustrated here is plug **314** configured from a resilient material that is deformable between a first formation, which indicates that the interior **304** of the container is in a non-vacuum state, and a second formation that indicates that the interior **304** of the container is in a vacuum state. In the first formation, the plug **314** is

normally biased so as to be substantially planar. In the second formation, the atmospheric pressure outside the container is greater than the pressure inside the container such that the plug 314 is deformed inwardly in a cupped formation. It should be noted that the vacuum indicating element may be configured as, by non-limiting example, a button on a stem, which seals the passageway, that is normally biased to extend above the top surface of the piston 10, and when a vacuum state is created within the interior of the container, the button is drawn downward. Alternatively, when used with embodiments configured to pressurize the interior of the container, the indicator may be configured as a pressure indicator.

In use with the pump configured to create a vacuum within the container, operation of the lid assembly is as follows:

1- The lid is deployed on the opening of the container.

2- The lid assembly is attached to the container. This may be accomplished, for example, by rotating the lid assembly in a clockwise direction until a vacuum tight seal is formed between the lid assembly and the container.

3- The actuating ring is rotated counter-clockwise so as to actuate the piston and remove at least some of the gases form the interior of the container. The number of turns may be determined by the number of piston strokes per revolution of the actuating ring, the amount of gases removed from the container per piston stroke (generally the displacement of the piston), and the amount of gases to be removed form the container. In embodiments with a vacuum indicator, the actuating ring is rotated until the vacuum indicator indicates sufficient vacuum has been achieved.

4- To dispense a portion of the contents of the container, the container is tipped as least partially upside down such that at least some of the contents contact the surface of the lid assembly exposed to the interior of the container, and an amount of contents enters the contents receptacle.

5- The dispensing handle is rotated so as to bring the contents receptacle into alignment with the contents outlet and the contents are removed.

6- When it is necessary to remove the lid assembly from the container, the actuating ring is pulled up (or away from the container), at least a portion of the actuating ring is compressed such that complementary teeth in both the actuating ring and the seal-portion engage, and the lid assembly is rotated in a counter-clockwise direction.

It will be readily understood that for any of the embodiments of the present invention described herein, that whether the valves of the pump are configured to create a vacuum within the interior of the container or to pressurize the interior of the container, the operation of the lid is basically the same. That is, as the actuating ring is turned, gasses are drawn into and then forced out of the pump. For creating a vacuum in the container, gasses are drawn from the interior of the container and forced out into the atmosphere. For pressurizing the container, gasses are drawn from the atmosphere and force into the interior of the container. In either case, the pump lid creates a pressure differential. That is a pressure different from atmospheric, within the interior of the container.

Turning now to a second preferred embodiment **500** of the present invention, as illustrated in Figures 13-20, the primary variation in this second preferred embodiment is the integration of the substantially cylindrical pump piston **510** and the piston actuating ring **508** into a single actuating ring/piston element **502**.

Here, as above, the lid assembly **500** is secured on the container **504** by seat-portion **506**. A portion of the seat-portion is configured so as to define at least part of a pump cylinder **506P**. Circumscribing at least a portion of the pump cylinder **506P** is the actuating ring portion **8** of the actuating ring/piston element **502**. The variable pump volume is defined between the pump cylinder **506P** and the substantially cylindrical pump piston portion **510** of the actuating ring/piston element **502** deployed therein. The outer circumferential wall of the cylinder **506P** is configured with the longitudinally-wave-like groove **514** as described above. The piston actuating ring **508** is configured with a pump activation pin **516** that extends into the groove **514**. As the actuating ring **508** is rotated about the pump cylinder **506P**, the pump activating pin **516** contacts the edge of the groove **514**. Due to the angle of the groove **514** in relation to the direction of the movement of the pump activating pin **516**, the torque of the actuating ring **508** is translated into linear motion of the actuating ring/piston element **502**. As described above, the wave-like configuration of the groove **514**, therefore, results in reciprocating linear motion of the actuating ring/piston element **502**. It will be appreciated that a configuration in which the wave-like groove is configured in the actuating ring **508** and the pump activating pin configured in the wall of the cylinder **506P** is within the spirit of the present invention.

When the pump is configured as a vacuum pump, as illustrated in Figure 13, as the piston **510** moves in a linear direction away from the seat-portion **506**, the variable pump volume increases in volume and gases are drawn from the interior of the container **504** into the pump through the one-way pump inlet valve **518**. As the piston **510** moves in a linear direction

toward seat-portion **506**, the variable pump volume decreases in volume, pressure in the variable pump volume increases, and gases are forced from the pump to the surrounding atmosphere through the one-way valve **520**. It will be appreciated that substantially any one-way valve such as but not limited to, flap valves and ball valves, may be used to control the direction of flow of gasses through the pump of the present invention.

When the pump is configured as a pressurizing pump **600**, as illustrated in Figure 20, as the piston **610** moves in a linear direction away from the seat-portion **606**, the variable pump volume increases in volume and gases are drawn from the surrounding atmosphere into the pump through the one-way valve **620**. As the piston **610** moves in a linear direction toward the seat-portion **606**, the variable pump volume decreases in volume, pressure in the variable pump volume increases, and gases are forced from the pump into the interior of the interior of the container **604** through the one-way pump valve **618**. It should be noted that just as filter **170** be associated with pump inlet opening between the pump and the interior of the container when the pump is configured as a vacuum pump, so to a filter may be associated with the inlet opening between the pump and the atmosphere when the pump is configured to pressurized the interior of the container.

As with the first preferred embodiment of the present invention, the second preferred embodiment may also be associated with the other features of the cap of the present invention. Figure 15 shows the cap **500** associated with a contents-dispensing mechanism **150** configured in the seat-portion **506**, and a filter **170**, both of which are described in detail above.

Figures 16 and 17 illustrate an alternative ratcheting configuration that limits rotation of the actuating ring/piston element **502** to a counter-clockwise direction in relation to the seat-portion **506** of the lid assembly **500**.

Figures 16, 18 and 19, illustrate an alternative selectively engagable lid-removal mechanism **700**. In a normally relaxed state, actuating ring/piston element **502** is biased, by either gravity or a spring configuration for example, such that teeth **702** configured in the actuating ring portion **508** do not engage teeth **704** configured in the seat-portion **506**. In order to unscrew the lid assembly **500** from the container **504**, the actuating ring/piston element **502** is raised (Figure 18), or moved longitudinally away from the container, until teeth **702** are aligned with teeth **704**. Once in a raised position, at least a portion of the actuating ring portion **508** is then compressed inwardly such that a number of teeth **702** engage a number of teeth **704** (see Figure 19). Rotation of the actuating ring/piston element **502** in relation to the seat-portion **506** is thereby locked and the lid assembly may be unscrewed by rotating the actuating

ring/piston element **502**, and therefore the entire lid assembly **500**. Alternatively, teeth **702** and **704** may be configured so as to be fully engaged when the actuating ring/piston element **502** is raised.

It will be appreciated that the above descriptions are intended only to serve as examples, and that many other embodiments are possible within the spirit and the scope of the present invention.